

“It was a really bad time” Pat Daugherty Reflects on the Crash

By Stan Bumgardner

Pat Daugherty, now 88, remembers the plane crash all too well. A 1955 graduate of Marshall, she worked for a while at WSAZ-TV. She recalls, “I worked at WSAZ doing commercials, but I wasn’t really very good, so I dropped that.”

Instead, she raised three children: Jimmy (who later passed on), Jane, and Carolyn. Her husband, who’s still living, was a prominent attorney in Huntington and former president of Marshall’s alumni association. Pat and David Howard Daugherty attended almost all of Marshall’s football and basketball games.

During our conversation, I learned coincidentally that she and I had been at the Cam Henderson Center at the same basketball game on February 7, 1985, when Bruce Morris—a backup guard who only diehard Marshall fans had heard of—threw up a prayer at the end of the first half from full court. To this day, Morris holds the record for the longest shot in basketball history: 89 feet, 10 inches. She and I both remember that moment exactly the same. When the shot went in, there was complete silence from the sellout crowd. We all seemed to be collectively thinking, “Did this just happen, or am I dreaming?” A second later, a deafening roar removed all doubt. It was a night no Herd fan will ever forget.

Sadly, she recalls the tragic night of November 14, 1970, in equal detail. Pat and David had just finished eating dinner, and the phone rang. “I was in such shock,” Pat remembers. “We lived downtown, and I just kept looking in the direction of the airport wondering what was happening.”

Pat notes how many people rushed to the site to help rescuers or simply because they didn’t know what else to do. “So many people

went down there,” Pat says, “but you couldn’t get close to the site.”

Like everyone in Huntington—and the families of players across the country—they prayed for survivors. But all too soon, it was clear that all had perished. As horrifying as that night was, Pat says the weeks that followed were surreal and just as depressing. Like most in Huntington, Pat and David knew many of the people on the plane. They also knew their children.

“We went to three funerals a day for probably two weeks solid. The saddest part was going to funerals and seeing two caskets.” There were seven funerals in which both a husband and wife were memorialized.

She also recalls assistant coach Red Dawson fondly. Dawson drove, instead of flying, to East Carolina because he wanted to do some recruiting along the way. As a result, he lived, but the survivors’ guilt he must have suffered is unimaginable.

Pat notes, “Red Dawson was at every funeral.” She went to the first memorial service, attended by more than 7,000 people, at Huntington’s Memorial Field House the day after the crash. The memorial was the inspiration of Field House manager Harold Beach. Beach’s wife, Margaret, recalled his efforts in putting that event together, “He worked day and night for that to get them suited for Marshall for the funerals. . . . He loved those boys. He loved those Marshall players.”

Marshall Student Body President Mike Gant memorialized the dead, “We are all brothers in this hour. . . . We have lost so many like ourselves . . . the wounds are deep . . . something is missing and we feel it very deeply.” He continued, “But never let



Pat Daugherty of Huntington. Courtesy of Pat Daugherty. Photographer unknown.

us forget that we shared with these people the most important things we have to give—ourselves.”

When Governor Arch Moore walked to the podium, he spoke mournfully, “These young people were our lives, and we had looked to them for a future.” He added, “To forget for a moment this tragedy would seem to be a tragedy of a greater type. I hope all will build to create a greater university and greater state as a living memorial.”

When it was finished, the mourners filed out silently, an atmosphere that Pat describes as “thick with grief and sadness.”

She remembers that the university and city always had a close connection, unlike many other medium-sized colleges. In part, that was because Marshall was more of a school for the local community than many schools then or today.

But the crash cemented that bond forever. Pat says it’s “like glue. We have things here that bring us all together with that crash.”

She adds that some of her sharpest memories of November 1970 seem somewhat random now. For one, after the crash, she remembers fresh-cut flowers in nearly every restaurant and business. The flowers had been sent from all over the country, including from East Carolina. She even remembers that flowers were left outside Davis’ Place, a longtime Huntington pub. She said, “Someone placed flowers outside Davis’ and left a note, ‘We used to go here and have a beer after the ballgame.’”

But Pat’s most vivid memory is of all the children left without parents. There’s no way to fill that void. Fifty years later, you can tell Pat is still searching for some way, even in the slightest, to help these children, but how can you replace such a loss?

“There was nothing we could do to help. It was a really bad time.” ❁

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